

HEALTH

## Survey Finds 30 Percent of LA County Teens Tried E-Cigs

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PUBLISHED 10:39 AM PT OCT. 09, 2019

VAN NUYS, Calif. -- The dissipating puffy clouds of smoke blown out of a vape pen might only leave a fruity aroma for others to smell, but it's also masking the use of nicotine and THC products by teens.

Recently, Patty Elliott found out her 14-year-old son has been using e-cigarettes and vaping marijuana for the past year. She shared that her son was caught with a THC-based vape pen at school and explained how he used it.

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"This is the pen and this is the cartridge. Some of the kids call it a cart. And this is mango-flavored, so the flavors definitely play into it. I mean, and you can't tell a lot of the time if they are vaping and it's a flavor. It just smells like fruit flavor," Elliott said.

That mango scent she's describing masks the odor of marijuana inside the vape pen. Her son started vaping at the age of 13. First with nicotine vapes, now marijuana. As a parent, Elliott didn't know what to do to help her son stop.

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Since then, Elliott spends her Tuesday nights sharing the progress and problems she and her son had in the previous week.

The nonprofit support group brings parents with similar issues together to help each other set ground rules, consequences and share ideas about how to help each family get their kids off drugs like opioids, heroin and marijuana.

The meetings have been helping but she said her son still finds ways to vape. Parents in these meetings are finding that more and more teens are vaping, [despite the risks of vape-related deaths](#) and lung injuries caused by it.

More than 30 percent of L.A. County high school students have tried e-cigarette products and about 10 percent use the products regularly, according to the [2017-18 California Student Tobacco Survey](#). That's why the nonprofit's founder is urging parents to pay more attention to their teen's behavior.

"We're hearing from our youth that come through our youth group that they're smoking marijuana or using vapes and the parents have no idea they are doing it. So, parents need to get more involved," said Dennis Poncher, founder of Because I Love You.

With the help of the group, Elliott has been using at-home drug tests, new communication skills and bag checks to prevent her son from vaping. She knows it'll be a long road but she's hoping her effort won't go unnoticed.

"I'm hoping that because he sees that I'm investing in him that he'll understand you know, how much I care about him and that I don't want anything negative to happen to him," Elliott said.

She knows it might be a long road but she hopes that these meetings will help her son stay away from vaping by also giving other parents in the room a chance to [learn from her teen's behavior](#).

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